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ABSTRACT

Most college students, whether they have learning disabilities or not, experience numerous difficulties in time management. They become easily distracted, do not set priorities, try to accomplish too much, procrastinate, use poor study techniques, or underestimate the amount of time required for a task. This paper outlines some symptoms and strategies for students beset with time management problems. First of all, students must work to reduce interruptions and limit distractions. They should set priorities and then act immediately to accomplish a task. Most students have six different categories of priorities: (1) Family; (2) School; (3) Employment; (4) Personal Obligations; (5) Leisure; and (6) Other. After examining their priorities, students should then allocate time for each category. Schedules and calendars may effectively help one organize time and a number of time management tools are discussed. By completing a weekly study and time schedule and by utilizing schedules and calendars to keep track of assignments, the student may effectively use his or her time. Appended are seven figures which provide time management charts along with tips on how to use time effectively. (RJM)

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Strategies on Time Management for College Students with Learning Disabilities

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We will begin this presentation with a brief review of the definition "Specific Learning Disability." According to Public Law 94-142, "Specific Learning Disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages.

Some characteristics of work and study habits that college students with learning disabilities exhibit are:

* Poor Organization and Budgeting of Time
* Difficulty Meeting Schedules
* Problems in Initiating and Sustaining Effort
* Difficulty Establishing Short- and Long-Term Goals and Objectives
* Inability to Identify Essential Task Requirements
* Poor Outlining and NoteTaking Skills
* Inadequate Study Skills Strategies.

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In reviewing this list, you can see that students having learning disabilities could benefit from learning strategies to effectively improve their time management behavior.

Time Management and Organizational Difficulties

Most college students whether they have learning disabilities or not experience one or more of the following difficulties:

1) Getting back on task after unexpected interruptions (receiving a call from your friend that you can not refuse).
2) Distractions which can be external or internal. External distractions refer to being annoyed by environmental stimulus, such as people talking, music playing, movement from a person or thing while you're reading. Internal distractions pertain to thoughts running through or struck in your head when trying to focus on a project, reading assignment, etc.
3) Not being able to set priorities. This is where the student feels everything demands equal attention, experiences difficulty in separating out, ordering or eliminating tasks.
4) Overload, too many things to do and too little time to complete tasks. This is a student who feels he/she has to take 15 credits of science and math courses, belong to a fraternity, plus is involved in organized athletics (sports). It may sound nice to family and friends, but you could be heading for a breakdown.
5) Procrastination, delaying of involvement in tasks, which can result in poorly researched projects, poorly written

assignments or late submission of assignments.

6) Can't study because of worries about personal problems, for example breaking-up of a relationship, serious health concerns, injury or death in family, etc.

7) Studying all night before exams, "cramming". This results in poor planning for studying, limited transfer into long-term memory, and exhibiting the "Dumping Syndrome" (releasing all information the student learned a day earlier about a subject on to the next day's exam).

8) Underestimating the time it will take to complete projects (i.e., researching subject four days before report is due and discovering there is inadequate or an over abundance of material to review).

Possible solutions to the previous difficulties consist of a variety of remedies. A student should learn to limit interruptions. When a friend calls, politely say, "I'm busy with work now can I call you back in an hour or tomorrow." "I can only talk with you right now for 30 minutes because I really need to study." If distractions are a problem locate a study area that is free from noises and movement of people. Find out which environment is most comfortable for you to work in (i.e., home, library, outdoors, friend's house, etc.). One can limit internal distractions by working on projects or reading assignments in short blocks of time, 30 minutes or shorter intervals. Reading assignments can also be alternated between blocks of study time (i.e, read eight pages of Biology, then ten pages of Economics).

Also, a student should begin to monitor when his/her mind wanders or when racing thoughts occur (ask the question does this happen every five, ten, or twenty minutes with all assignments or only with certain subjects).

Learn to set priorities by determining what needs should be taken are of first. Decrease procrastination through action, why put boring tasks off until tomorrow when you can do them today. Reward yourself when the task is complete, for example buy yourself a frozen yogurt, take a hike, or throw a party.

The student should come to a decision on the seriousness of his/her personal problem. Determine if one should require counseling to resolve or assist in dealing with the problem; or decide if one is putting too much effort in worrying about much of nothing. The important point here is to make a decision as quickly as possible and then act on your decision.

The last bit of advice pertains to allowing sufficient time to prepare for an examination. Review notes 24 hours after a class, continue daily familiarity with new course material. Create test questions from notes and or information taken from textbook readings. It is suggested that a student begin studying for exams five to seven days ahead of test date. If two exams are due in the same week utilize alternate days for studying subject content.

Identifying Priorities

This Time Management Workshop has identified six different categories of priorities. The categories are: Family, School,

Employment, Personal Obligations, Leisure and Other. Each student has a different set of priorities and an individual's set of priorities may change from one month to the next or from semester to semester. For example, the student this Fall semester may have these priorities in ranking order: 1) School, 2) Personal Obligations - President of Student Economics Organization, and 3) Leisure. The same student in the Spring semester could have these priorities: 1) Employment (lost financial aid), 2) School and Personal Obligations. Priorities are not set in stone so it is important to adapt to changes and identify a new list of priorities as needed.

Time Management Organizers, Schedules and Calendars

The first organizer presented in the workshop is, How to Plan Study Time (see figure 1). This form was borrowed from the book, "Best Practices". The form is self-explanatory, describing how a student can determine how much time to study for a particular course. The presenter added lines for class and study hours per class in the bottom half of the page so students can make adjustments to study hours per class.

The second is a schedule, Study & Time Schedule/Log also taken from the "Best Practices" book (see figure 2). It allows the student to schedule in those determined priorities and break them down into specifics (i.e., work hours, course hours, study times, eating/sleeping/driving times, weekly meeting, volleyball practice, taking child to daycare, etc.). It is suggested that the student

schedule study time as close to the course time as possible. For example, Biology course times are Monday, Wednesday and Friday - 9:00 - 9:50 am. Study time for Biology could be Monday 4:00 - 5:00 pm., Wednesday 6:00 - 8:00 pm. and Friday 2:00 - 4:00 pm. The reason for this is to limit confusion, the student is able to review materials from the class on the same day he/she receive the lecture, if the student has a question about lecture or reading assignment the student can contact the professor or tutor to ask for clarification before the next scheduled class.

For individuals who procrastinate, the Daily Schedule (see figure 3) and the Weekly Schedule (see figure 4) could be beneficial, both were extracted from the book "Facilitating an Academic Support Group for Students With Learning Disabilities: A Manual for Professionals". The presenter provided one adaptation to these forms, the addition of an "accomplished" column. The "accomplished" column informs the student that all or some tasks were completed. The half completed tasks need to be continued sometime later in that day or sometime during that week. These forms are self-explanatory and easy to use.

Suggestions are given to use monthly calendars scheduling in due dates of assignments, projects and exams. The purpose is to contain a large majority of information (date of projects, assignments and exams) in one central location on one calendar (see figure 5 and figure 6). Then this information can be transferred to the weekly calendar to schedule daily study time and completion of work on tasks.

All organizers and calendars should be located in a place where the student has quick access to them. This requires a change in behavior. Reviewing calendars daily, transferring information from monthly calendars to weekly or daily schedules on a weekly basis is a habit that must be developed to maintain effective time management skills, this also assists in eliminating procrastination.

Additional Time Management Techniques

It is important to beat procrastination. Once procrastination begins it affects all areas of one's life, from delaying school assignments, putting off major decisions (i.e., moving, checking health problems, finances, etc.) to constantly being behind schedule in job tasks. A few pointer to resolving the dilemma:

1) Acknowledge the Problem
2) Break Up the Task
3) Do Something
4) Get Psyched
5) Promise Yourself a Reward

For other tips that can help the student utilize time more effectively (see figure 7), read "More Important Tips to Help You Stretch the Clock".

Conclusion

In reviewing this workshop, the essential ideas to remember are: Identifying then eliminating Time Management/Organization

difficulties, identifying priorities and understanding priorities can change due to changing circumstances, completing a weekly study & time schedule/log, calculating study time and utilizing schedules and calendars to keep track of assignments, events and projects.

References

Johnson, J. (1989) Facilitating an Academic Support Group for Students with Learning Disabilities: A Manual for Professionals. Columbus, OH.: Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) (1981) Learning Disabilities: Issues on Definition. Perspectives on Dyslexia, vol 17, (1), Winter (1991), p. 15-16.

Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (1990) Best Practices. Milwaukee, WI.: Author.

How to Plan Study Time

The general rule for planning study time is that you should study two (2) hours for every hour in class.

CLASS	HOURS IN CLASS EACH WEEK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
TOTAL HOURS IN CLASS =	_____

TOTAL HOURS IN CLASS _____ X 2 = _____ HOURS I SHOULD PLAN FOR STUDY TIME EACH WEEK.

NOW, HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU THINK YOU WILL REALLY STUDY? _____

FILL-IN YOUR WEEKLY STUDY SCHEDULE WITH YOUR STUDY HOURS.

CLASS	STUDY HOURS
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Figure 1

Study & Time Schedule/Log

Name_____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 7 a.m.							
7 - 8 a.m.							
8 - 9 a.m.							
9 - 10 a.m.							
10-11 a.m.							
11-12 p.m.							
12- 1 p.m.							
1 - 2 p.m.							
2 - 3 p.m.							
3 - 4 p.m.							
4 - 5 p.m.							
5 - 6 p.m.							
6 - 7 p.m.							
7 - 8 p.m.							
8 - 9 p.m.							
9 - 10 p.m.							
10-11 p.m.							
11-12 a.m.							
12- 1 a.m.							
1 - 6 a.m.							

* Students are encouraged to enlarge form and make changes as needed.

Figure 2

DAILY SCHEDULE

Today I must . . . .

Course	Work to be done	Due by	How long will it take?	When will I do it?	Accomplished

* Students are encouraged to extend columns.

Figure 3

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week of _____

Course	Work to be done	Due by	How long will it take?	When will I do it?	Accomplished

* Students are encourage to extend columns.

Figure 4

MONTH : _____

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Figure 5

REFERENCE CALENDAR

19__ Month: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Figure 6

MORE IMPORTANT TIPS TO HELP YOU STRETCH THE CLOCK

USE WAITING TIME
Think of the hours spent waiting in lines, between classes, etc. Use this time to read a book, jot down ideas, etc.

DON'T CRAM
It's ineffective and inefficient. Have an organized way to study for tests - and give yourself plenty of time!

TACKLE HARD SUBJECTS FIRST
The feeling of achievement can give your day momentum. Build on success!

AVOID PERFECTIONISM
Unless perfection is called for, don't waste valuable time trying to make every project you do letter-perfect.

KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTIONS
There's no bigger waste of time than following wrong directions for an assignment. If you're not sure, ask your instructor.

PLAN CREATIVE TIME
Schedule time each day to do things that recharge your creative batteries or help put your life in perspective.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF
Proper exercise and nutrition help you stay physically fit and mentally alert. Make time for both! (Consult your physician before you start an exercise program.)

DON'T OVERCOMMIT
Don't spread yourself too thin. Commit yourself to only those activities you can manage in the time you have.

Figure 7